

Dear Committee members,

I am Bill Kennedy, Yellowstone County Commissioner. I want to express my opposition to HB 30, which would eliminate the opportunity for voters in Yellowstone County and across the State of Montana to register and vote on Election Day. I'm sorry that I can't be there in person to testify.

More than 2600 Yellowstone County residents have use the opportunity to register and vote on Election Day since that opportunity was first established in 2006. I know they do so for a lot of very legitimate and different reasons.

Often times, it's through no fault of their own that they arrive to vote on Election Day and find out they're not registered, even though they believed they were registered. Some people have registered through DMV only to find that their names do not show up on the voter list.

Some needed to register to vote because of a number of problems that may occur, I don't believe that any of these people should be denied the chance to vote. It's their right to vote be it by mail-in ballot or on Election Day.

You may have heard a lot about the long lines in some of our communities on Election Day, Billings included, with some wanting to put the blame on the people trying to register and vote on Election Day. I urge you NOT to put the blame on these electors. We know we had problems in Billings with long lines and we're working to make that system better. Our county commissioners voted to consolidate polling places in the city of Billings down to one location to save money, which proved to be a challenge given the large turnout in this Presidential election. We noted after the election we could use improved parking, staffed drop off boxes for mailed ballots, better instructions at the beginning of lines to promptly direct people to either their precinct or to a same day registration line, and better online services. We need more election day staffing to adequately handle this. Yellowstone County's delay in counting ballots after the close of election was not due to the folks who registered on Election Day.

Our challenge as a state is to make it easier and more efficient for legitimate and qualified residents to vote, not to eliminate the opportunity for them to vote, as this bill does. We do not want to keep anyone from voting on Election Day.

I urge you to vote no on this bill.

Thank you.